

**Minutes of the Meeting
July 2, 1998**

Projects Reviewed

Nordstrom Office Building
Concord Elementary School
Weller Street Bridge
Mayor Schell Proposal (SDC final review)
Columbia Hotel Renovation

Convened: 8:00am

Adjourned: 2:00pm

Commissioners Present

Barbara Swift, Chair
Moe Batra
Carolyn Darwish
Gail Dubrow
Bob Foley
Gerald Hansmire
Jon Layzer

Staff Present

Michael Read
Peter Aylsworth
Rebecca Walls

070298.1 Project: **Nordstrom Office Building**
 Phase: Alley Vacation (Subcommittee: Swift, Dubrow, Foley)
 Presenters: Beverly Barnett, Seattle Transportation
 Tom Berger, The Berger Partnership
 Al Clise, Clise Properties Inc.
 Patrick Doherty, Construction and Land Use
 Tory Laughlin Taylor, Housing Resources Group
 Mike Whalen, AIA
 Time: 1.25 hr. (Hourly-Subcommittee)

The project was presented to the subcommittee in order to better understand the alley vacation process and to get more detail on what constitutes public benefit. The public benefits of the affordable housing, only possible with an alley vacation, are the on-site development opportunity and the 26 additional units above what is required for the FAR bonus.

Although the housing bonus would be purchased whether or not it was built on site, the available land offers an opportunity to develop affordable housing in the Downtown core.

The Draft Neighborhood Plan identified several streetscape priorities that could be addressed by this project—improvements to paving (streets, alleys, sidewalks), improved lighting (especially in alleys), and repair and maintenance of existing transit shelters and construction of new shelters. In response to these Neighborhood Plan goals, the applicant offered the following public benefits, beyond what is required by code, to be included as part of the project:

- repave the entire alley, both vacated and non-vacated portions, with patterned concrete of a type typically found in pedestrian areas;
- provide upgraded lighting throughout the alley, both vacated and non-vacated portions, to improve both the quantity and quality of lighting for security and aesthetic reasons;
- contribute funds for the construction of two new off-site transit shelters or contribute funds for the repair and maintenance of existing transit shelters in the neighborhood.

The applicant requested the Commission's support of the alley vacation based on the following public benefits:

1. creation of 65 units of affordable housing in the downtown core,
2. development of housing units above the FAR bonus requirements,
3. the alley will remain available for public use per easement agreements,
4. enhanced alley paving and lighting,
5. contribution to neighborhood transit shelter construction and/or maintenance,
6. no significant increase in FAR on the block between scheme A and scheme B.

Discussion:

Swift: It is helpful to separate the components that result in FAR bonuses from those that could be considered clear public benefit. I still have questions about the actual cost of the land in a speculative market versus the cost of the land for affordable housing.

Layzer: There is an intangible value in the opportunity for downtown affordable housing that is fantastic. If the value could be quantified somehow, it would be easier to judge whether or not it is equivalent to the alley vacation. A public benefit becomes the difference between the market value of the quarter block and what the Housing Resources Group has to pay for it. Although the massing of single office tower is more desirable than two separate office buildings, the city is giving up light and air for a higher FAR on the block. It is important for the proponent of

the project to come to the City, in good faith, with a description of what the private benefits are so that they can be compared with the public benefits.

- Clise:** The only real private benefit is the consolidation of Nordstrom in a single building with 535,000 square feet rather than two buildings with the same total square footage.
- Batra:** That is the kind of private benefit I think Jon is talking about. Getting a much more efficient use of space is a private benefit that should be mitigated with equal public benefit.
- Dubrow:** I look at this project as an urban design problem rather than an issue of fiscal analysis. There is a clear benefit to Nordstrom in having a single office building, but I wonder if the taller building makes sense for this area of the city in terms of the cityscape. I see the alley vacation as a contrivance to get the necessary FAR onto the half-block. I would like more information on the meeting with the Denny Triangle Advisory Committee regarding the nature of the discussion.
- Whalen:** We are still trying to understand the process. The single office tower we are proposing is still within the allowable zoning with a 300 foot height limit.
- Clise:** The housing won't happen without the alley vacation. The public benefit is essentially the affordable housing. It is a great opportunity to build affordable housing in the downtown core without having to wait for a site.
- Dubrow:** I recognize that there are public and private benefits with the proposed alley vacation. The issue is whether or not they are equal. We have not yet been given sufficient information to compare the public and private benefits either qualitatively or quantitatively.
- Whalen:** The private benefit would be somewhat greater in scheme A, with a single office building instead of two separate buildings. However, scheme B is still a viable development alternative which meets Nordstrom's office space requirements and offers a significant improvement over the present situation—with offices located in numerous buildings throughout the downtown area. Unfortunately, scheme B precludes the possibility of including affordable housing in the project.
- Swift:** I think there is a strong public benefit, but I still have concerns that the financial aspects of the public and private benefits are not equivalent. There must be a way to put some figures on the benefits. I would like to see quantified the cost of the transferable development rights and the land cost for the Housing Resource Group versus the market rate value.
- Clise:** There are many factors to consider. The cost of the land, the cost of developing it, and the benefits of downtown affordable housing all need to be factored in. The City is not losing anything. The alley will remain open and usable, the property owner will pay annual property taxes and maintenance costs for the alley, and the single office tower is a more efficient use of space.
- Dubrow:** If some of the mitigation issues rest on the design of the building, then we need to look at the streetscape and pedestrian environment. In what way does the building enhance its surroundings.
- Whalen:** There are no setbacks on the site so the building will have an urban street edge similar to other retail fronts in downtown office buildings. There will be continuous weather protection along the sidewalk. We don't think that street furniture is appropriate for the amount of pedestrian traffic.
- Berger:** We have reduced the special paving at the building entrances and are using a standard two-by-two foot scoring pattern. The alley will be entirely paved with a four-by-four foot grid scoring pattern.

- Whalen:** We haven't yet presented to the whole Denny Triangle group, but have discussed the project with the co-chair of the committee in regards to their draft Neighborhood Plan. Their comments included improvements to sidewalk and alley paving, alley and sidewalk lighting, transit shelter installation and maintenance. We are replacing the sidewalk and alley paving, providing alley lighting, and are looking at ways to contribute to the transit shelters on adjacent properties. We can also work with the Denny Triangle group to address the transit shelter needs throughout the neighborhood. We don't think that additional streets lights are necessary in conjunction with overhead canopy lighting. More pedestrian amenities will evolve as the project develops.
- Batra:** Is there an opportunity for public art at the building entries?
- Whalen:** There is. Clise Properties wants to develop a quality building, both for its tenants and for the community. This won't be a speculative office building.
- Dubrow:** The Denny Triangle concerns seem to dovetail with some of our concerns. A clear, sharp street front is important, but public benefit consists of things like transit shelters, perhaps with seating. I am also wondering what the site and neighborhood was like historically.
- Whalen:** The south end of the half block was the Music Hall Theater and the north end has been a parking lot for decades.
- Dubrow:** An urban design analysis might be helpful. I would like to see what the area looked like in the past. It may be a source of inspiration for public amenities. The streetscape could involve historic reminders of what was once happening at the site and in the neighborhood. It would give the site a sense of place within the community and within the city's history.
- Taylor:** It is a changing area.
- Dubrow:** It may be a good idea to remind people of those changes.
- Doherty:** The alley vacation results in a single combined site which allows for additional FAR. The affordable housing, for additional FAR bonuses, would take place either on this site or elsewhere in the city. The real public benefit would be on-site development of affordable housing and any additional housing units provided above the FAR bonus requirements.
- Barnett:** Public benefit is a difficult concept to deal with quantitatively. Street vacation policies for commercial developments define public benefit using economic factors such as jobs, tax revenue, etc. The Council has lately been more interested in the pedestrian environment, streetscapes, and retail frontage. Affordable housing is defined as a benefit in the street vacation policies. The urban design benefit is also a important factor and can be difficult to quantify. The Council seems to be raising the bar, requiring further public benefits. It is difficult to evaluate what they will consider adequate benefit. It would be easier if the alley was being vacated physically rather than as a paper mechanism for increased FAR. I struggle with whether or not it is appropriate to use the alley vacation to sidestep Land-Use Code intentions. Both the streetscape and the building's fit within the history of the site and the area are also important.
- Dubrow:** Were there a policy to evaluate public benefit in these situations, everyone would be more comfortable. Now we only have an impression of what is public benefit, and in the end, I find it wanting a package of pedestrian amenities to clearly throw it over the top. Things like bus shelters or benches for transit users could also link back to Nordstrom employees using mass transportation. I also find the history of the site compelling. Pedestrian amenities and links to the surrounding street fabric would be clear public benefits.

- Swift** Looking at the June 18 action, it seems that the only change would be the reference to the history of the site and surrounding area. Although I appreciate your approach, the paving and lighting, along the alley and sidewalk, are part of the basic zoning requirements. The Commission is also asking the City to look at a financial analysis to assess whether the public and private benefits are compatible.
- Foley:** There have been arrangements between the City and developers in the past with intangible benefits. I am concerned that the financial aspects of these benefits can be quantified and the City needs to understand what they are. I want to see a balanced amount of public and private benefits.
- Dubrow:** The public benefits should easily outweigh the private ones as mitigation for the alley vacation.
- Taylor:** Having a site for the housing development is an important benefit.
- Action:** **The Commission subcommittee appreciates the briefing and refers to the action of the June 18 meeting with the following amendments.**

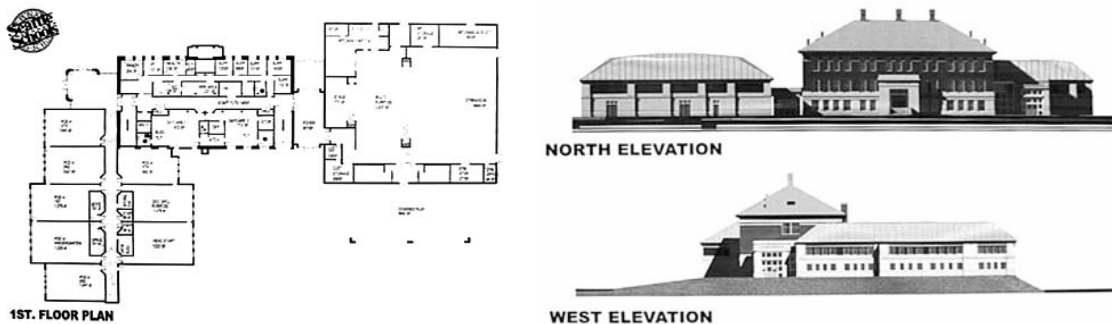
6/18/98 Action: The Commission supports the separation of the two buildings from an urban design perspective although it is counter to the intent of an alley vacation. The Commission realizes that the increase in housing units from 39 to 65 is a clear public benefit not tied to the FAR bonuses and makes the following recommendations.

- pursue further development of public benefits beyond those tied to FAR bonuses;
 - develop the streetscape environment with attention to public amenities such as seating, transit shelters, drinking fountains, donations to the public arts fund, and others that may be identified in Neighborhood Planning efforts.
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- **the subcommittee urges the development team, in pursuit of streetscape elements, to evaluate the urban design condition within the neighborhood context and to return with a package of benefits tied to the public realm;**
 - **the subcommittee recommends looking at the historic uses of the site as a basis for developing streetscape amenities that enhance the public realm and give a sense of place within the city's history;**
 - **the subcommittee urges the City to develop a mechanism for tracking the economic analysis for vacations;**
 - **as infill development increases, the subcommittee urges the City to develop policies for the Downtown district that address the use of vacations as paper mechanisms for increased FAR.**

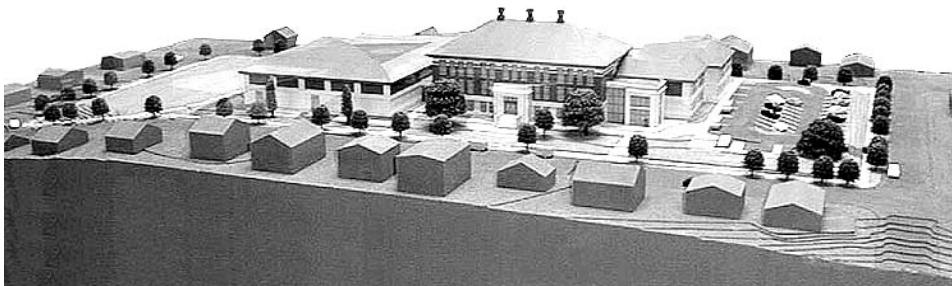
070298.2 Project: **Concord Elementary School**
 Phase: Alley Vacation
 Presenters: Beverly Barnett, Seattle Transportation
 Don Gillmore, Seattle Public Schools
 Bob Katica, Tsang Partnership
 David Werner, Heery International
 Time: 1 hr. (Hourly)

The Concord Elementary School is located in South Park between Concord and Henderson streets, and Seventh and Eighth avenues south. An unimproved alley extends into the site approximately one half of a block west from Eighth Avenue. Two houses, previously backing on the alley, have been demolished.

The Concord Elementary School currently has approximately 275 students in Kindergarten through Fifth grade. The addition of a classroom wing and gymnasium will increase the capacity to 550 students. The existing three story school building, a designated local landmark built in 1920, fronts on Concord Street and will be refurbished. The existing gymnasium, with a small multi-purpose room, will be expanded and a new classroom wing, with daycare facilities, will be added to the west end of the existing school building. Next to this classroom wing, at the west end of the site will be a new parking lot with a drop-off lane.



Connecting the site with an alley vacation allows for a grass play field at the east end of the site, a larger gymnasium facility, a visible hard-surface play area, and on-site parking for 45 cars. Concord Street will also be improved with two additional parking lanes for over 70 cars and a bus drop-off. The development will also provide an improved storm water management system, restoration of the existing historic school building, community access to a computer lab and library inside the building, and a child care facility in the classroom wing.



Site Model

The project has previously been presented to the Design Review Board, the Department of Neighborhoods, the Historic Landmarks Committee, a Levy Oversight Committee, and the Seattle School District Board.

Discussion:

- Batra:** Did the restoration of the existing building include seismic upgrades?
- Katica:** Yes.
- Batra:** Is there a significant grade change in the play field area?
- Katica:** There is a 20 foot high bank now that will be cut to fill in the field area, resulting in an eight foot high bank east of the new gymnasium. This eight foot bank will have stairs and an ADA accessible path and will also serve to visually enclose the play field.
- Layzer:** Is the hard surface play area covered?
- Katica:** Only one part adjacent to the gymnasium.
- Batra:** What kind of storm water retention is required?
- Katica:** The City allows us to release certain amounts of water. We are providing additional storm water retention so that it can be released at the required levels.
- Gillmore:** The area around the school has poor drainage now. Improving the drainage on this site, given its size, will greatly improve the drainage for the surrounding area.
- Foley:** Is the capacity based on the amount of drainage or on City standards?
- Gillmore:** It is based on City standards.
- Darwish:** What kind of sports will the play field accommodate?
- Katica:** It is not quite large enough to be a regulation soccer field.
- Gillmore:** Since we don't have room for a full-sized soccer field, the use will not be formally defined. It will serve as large, flexible green space for the school and the community.
- Darwish:** Will it be fenced?
- Katica:** Yes, there will standard cyclone fencing around the play fields from the northeast corner of the gymnasium around the site to the south east corner of the new classroom wing. The parking area will not be fenced.
- Gillmore:** It is School District policy to fence in play fields.
- Dubrow:** I don't see any logical reason for the alley not to be vacated. It will enhance safety and is a straightforward benefit to the school and to the neighborhood. I also appreciate your sensitivity to the historic school building.
- Gillmore:** The alley is currently unimproved and overgrown with weeds.
- Layzer:** I think the alley vacation makes sense. Will there be a parent drop-off parking area?
- Katica:** It is currently very unorganized. In the proposed parking lot there will be a drop-off lane next to the classroom wing during peak times. This allows parents to pull in away from the busses.
- Gillmore:** We are also adding two new lanes of parking along Concord Street.
- Layzer:** Have you thought about using the blank walls of the gymnasium as opportunities for the art program.
- Katica:** We are not involved in the actual artwork design, but have discussed the west gymnasium facade as a potential place for art.
- Layzer:** I appreciate the opportunity to see the school design and appreciate your taking the time to make this presentation. I would also like to see how the project develops.
- Darwish:** I would also like to see how the play fields develop.
- Gillmore:** We will begin the construction document phase in three weeks. I don't want the alley vacation to be contingent on the play field design.
- Layzer:** It wouldn't be in terms of the alley vacation, but just a briefing on the project's development.
- Dubrow:** We aren't interested in holding up the process.

- Foley:** The cut and fill areas in the play field should be carefully considered in terms of drainage.
- Katica:** We have a Geo-technical report on the soils. It is primarily sandy soil, so drainage will be easier.
- Gillmore:** There will be a layer of drain rock put under the fill with 85 percent compacted soils and perforated drain pipe.
- Foley:** What is the School District policy on trees around schools?
- Gillmore:** Around the perimeter of the site, Seattle Transportation dictates where trees can be placed. The School Board won't install high shrubs and the trees are all limbed up to six feet. The maintenance department wants a limited amount of leaves to deal with. We also don't want trees close enough to the buildings that students could get on the roof. We are trying to install as many trees as possible. The community could add trees if they meet these criteria.
- Dubrow:** Perhaps you could identify some of the zones in which the community could consider adding trees.
- Gillmore:** Given the small site, the only available zones are along the south side and in the play field area. We hope to have some nice shade trees in the play field area.
- Layzer:** My final suggestion is to make the United States map to scale with regards to the location of the state of Alaska. Even if part of it disappears under the building, it is important for children to understand its relationship to the rest of the country.
- Action:** **The Commission appreciates the comprehensive presentation and recommends approval of the alley vacation based on the clear public benefit of enhanced security and the creation of a play field. The Commission requests a future briefing as the project develops.**

070298.3 Project: **Weller Street Bridge**
 Phase: Contract Documents
 Presenters: Joe Beck, King County Metro Transit
 Rachel Ben-Shmuel, Ben-Shmuel & Associates
 Rich Murakami, Arai/Jackson
 Carol Pennie, KPFF Consulting Engineers
 Time: .5 hr. (Hourly)

The proposed bridge design has a flat roof with a gabled skylight in the center that terminates over the glass elevator shaft. The bridge roof is supported by a row of single columns on each side, except at the west end next to the stair landings, where it is supported by two rows of double columns.

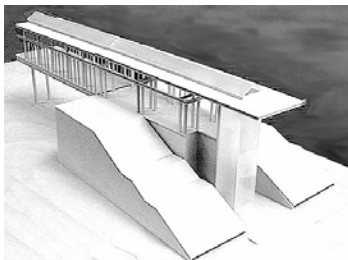
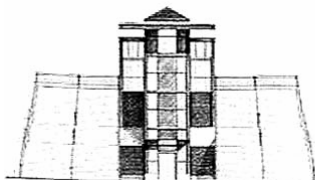
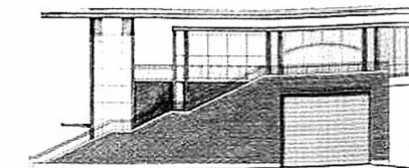


Photo of model



West elevation



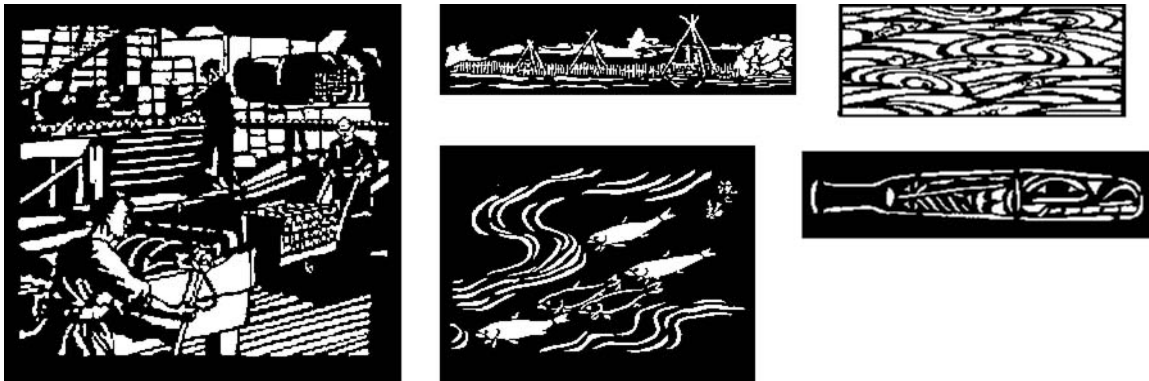
Partial south elevation

The brick facades under the west end stairs will be similar to King Street Station with a wire cut finish for the field and a smooth finish for the accents. The field will be a Flemish bond pattern. The metal grills will be 30 inch panels of 14 gauge perforated steel. The elevator shaft will be

clear glass with columns of frosted glass on the corners of the north and south sides. It will have black aluminum frames with similar profiles to the King Street Station windows. The 1 in 12 pitch roof, not including the skylight, will have a weathered-zinc colored metal roofing.

The stairs will be lit with riser lights and four 16 inch by 16 inch back lit, sandblasted, glass block inlays on each of the top landings. Both the skylight and the elevator shaft will have fiber-optic back lighting and the bridge will be lit by a central row of cone shaped lights hung from the roof structure.

The concept for the artwork is “bridging many cultures,” using a salmon theme. The artists have prepared examples of patterns for the laser cut steel screens that will cast shadows of the images on the bridge deck.



Examples of laser cut steel screen patterns

Discussion:

- Dubrow:** I think the project looks great. How do the perforated steel grills attach to the structure; are they infill or applied to the exterior?
- Murakami:** The structural frame will be exposed on the interior of the bridge. The steel grills will be mounted to a tube steel frame and applied to the exterior of the structure.
- Batra:** Will the roof have gutters?
- Murakami:** Yes the entire perimeter of the roof will have gutters.
- Darwish:** Will the steel screen images have identification labels?
- Murakami:** I can't really speak for the artists, but I think they have decided not to label the screen images.
- Dubrow:** Has the design been approved by the Arts Commission?
- Read:** In a previous meeting, Carol Valenta seemed confident that the artists were on the right track.
- Layzer:** Will the east end structure be the same as the west end?
- Murakami:** It will be similar with a sliding gate and double columns infilled with screens and grills.
- Hansmire:** This project has undergone tremendous development and improvement since the initial conceptual was presented. I commend you on thoroughly developing the original idea into an elegant and graceful solution. My only question is whether or not the two shades of glass on the elevator core are necessary. I like the idea of the glowing elevator shaft, but a single shade of glass might be simpler.
- Murakami:** Only the skylight and the corners of the north and south sides of the elevator core will have a frosted glass. These areas will also have fiber-optic back lighting. Since the elevator has to have doors on both the east and west sides, the north and

south sides will be solid. All of the glazing will be framed in a black steel frame with similar profiles as the King Street station windows.

Hansmire: I only offer the suggestion as a way to further unify the elevator core into a single column. The black frames will probably be enough to unify it visually.

Foley: I like the idea of concentrating the art on the south side. It is logical and also provides a subtle break in the strong symmetry of the entire bridge.

Layzer: In previous presentations you have talked about future connections to the bridge from the rail platforms below. Have you thought about a mechanism to preserve the design objectives of the bridge in future additions or connections?

Beck: OTAK will be the designers for those platform connections.

Murakami: We have met with them to discuss the bridge design and their concepts for connecting to it.

Layzer: You have done an amazing job with this project in a very short time and I would hate for future development to compromise it.

Beck: We have had several meetings with OTAK and are confident in their ability to respect the bridge design. The stair connections will also be self-supporting.

Murakami: The artists for this project have also been working with Bill Will, the artist working with OTAK on King Street Station.

Swift: In a previous review the Design Commission asked the design team to take a breath, step back, and re-evaluate the project. I sense that you have done that and the result is a simple and elegant solution. This design sets a high standard of design excellence for OTAK and other development in the area. I commend you on the development of wonderful project.

Action: **The Commission recommends approval of the project as presented and applauds the successful development and resolution of the design. The Commission encourages future connections to the bridge to continue the same level of design excellence demonstrated in this project.**

070298.4 Project: **Mayor Shell Proposal**
 Phase: Final Review
 Presenters: Commission & Staff discussion
 Time: .5 hr. (N/C)

Vanessa Murdock presented the final version of the response to Mayor Shell's proposal to the Commission for discussion. It will then be revised and sent to the Mayor and the City Council.

070298.5 Project: **Commission Business**

Action Items:

- A. MINUTES OF JUNE 18TH MEETING: Approved as amended.

Discussion Items:

- B. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH: Read reported. The job opportunity has been advertised in national papers and on City web sites. A brochure is available for anyone interested in the position.
- C. SOUND TRANSIT FIELD TRIP TO PORTLAND: Batra and Layzer reported on Portland's approach to a mass transit system.
- D. MUNICIPAL CENTER UPDATE: Hansmire reported on a Municipal Work Group meeting about the Master Planning process. The Master Planning phase is scheduled to last 3 months and to be done within the Executive Services Department.
- E. SOUND TRANSIT TRI-COMMISSION REVIEW: Read reported on a draft scope developed for the Tri-Commission review process.
- F. MARRIOTT HOTEL: Swift reported. The waterfront Marriott Hotel has undergone significant design changes resulting in a more complex, pedestrian friendly building that fits within the waterfront context.
- G. UW INTERNS: Read, Dubrow reported. An MOA is being completed.
- H. WSCTC EXPANSION PROJECT: Read reported
- I. REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE ACTION PLAN BROWN BAG: Darwish, Foley reported. The brown bag served to educate the Council on sustainability issues.
- J. CONCRETE COLOR PATCHES: Walls reported. The Seatran patch policy is to match paving materials and colors.
- K. LIVABLE COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE AND FAIR: Read reported.
- L. DESIGN REVIEW UPDATE & APA/APW AWARD: Friedman reported. The Design Review has won the APA award in two categories. A video is being developed for use in training workshops for board members.
- M. DHHS CITY DEPARTMENT COORDINATION: Walls reported on the Commission's possible involvement with non-profit housing development.
- N. SDC ACCOUNTING: Walls reported
- O. FOOTBALL NW (FIRST & GOAL): Walls reported. The stadium project will be coming in to present the development of urban design elements.

070298.6 Project: **Columbia Hotel Renovation**
 Phase: Schematics
 Presenters: Susan Cary, South East Effective Development
 Cindy Erickson, Housing & Human Services
 Robert Kovalenko, Kovalenko Hale Architects
 Time: .25 hr. (0.3%)

Located in the Rainier Valley, the Columbia Hotel was constructed as a residence in the late 1800's and converted to a hotel around 1900. Two subsequent additions were completed in the 1920's and the 1940's. The first floor commercial spaces, consisting of rental offices and a pastry shop, were remodeled in 1986.

Above the commercial ground floor are two floors of housing, also remodeled in 1985. Each floor has one studio apartment and three one-bedroom apartments. All of the apartments will be updated with new carpet and kitchen cabinets and will become affordable housing.

The stucco exterior of the building, first applied in the 1920's, will be repainted, roof drains and flashing will be repaired, and surrounding sidewalks will be replaced.

Discussion:

Batra: Who were the previous commercial tenants?

Cary: The Central Area Mental Health Agency was a tenant for three to four years. The commercial space has since been used by temporary tenants such as campaign headquarters.

Batra: Does the pastry shop kitchen meet current code requirements?

Kovalenko: Yes, it was remodeled in 1986 as a class-B kitchen with appropriate venting. The housing renovation is really a deferred maintenance project since the 1985 remodel.

Cary: Each of the four units on both floors is unique creating a wide variety of apartments to rent.

Walls: Has the color palette been approved by the Landmarks Board?

Kovalenko: Yes.

Cary: The community has enthusiastically supported the renovation and the affordable housing.

Foley: I commend you for a thoughtful project and a thorough presentation.

Action: **The Commission appreciates the presentation and recommends approval of the project as presented in schematic design**